

Inyo County News-Letter

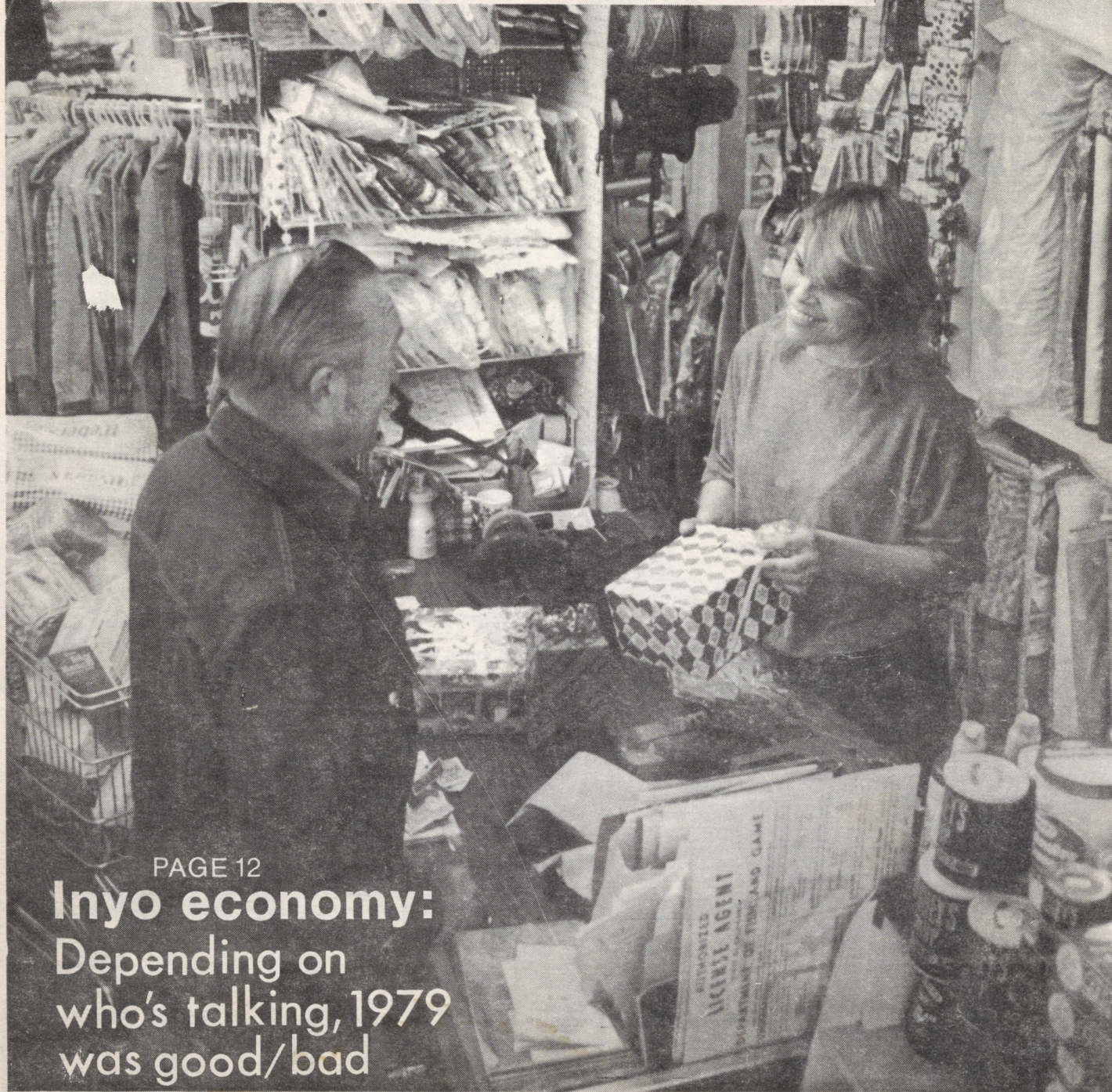
A News Alternative

• Eastern Sierra News Service

Dec. 19, 1979

75¢

Merry
Christmas!



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Depending on
who's talking, 1979
was good/bad

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INYO P.4



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A News Alternative

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Patricia Duncan

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May all the joys of Christmas
brighten your holiday
and the year to come



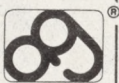
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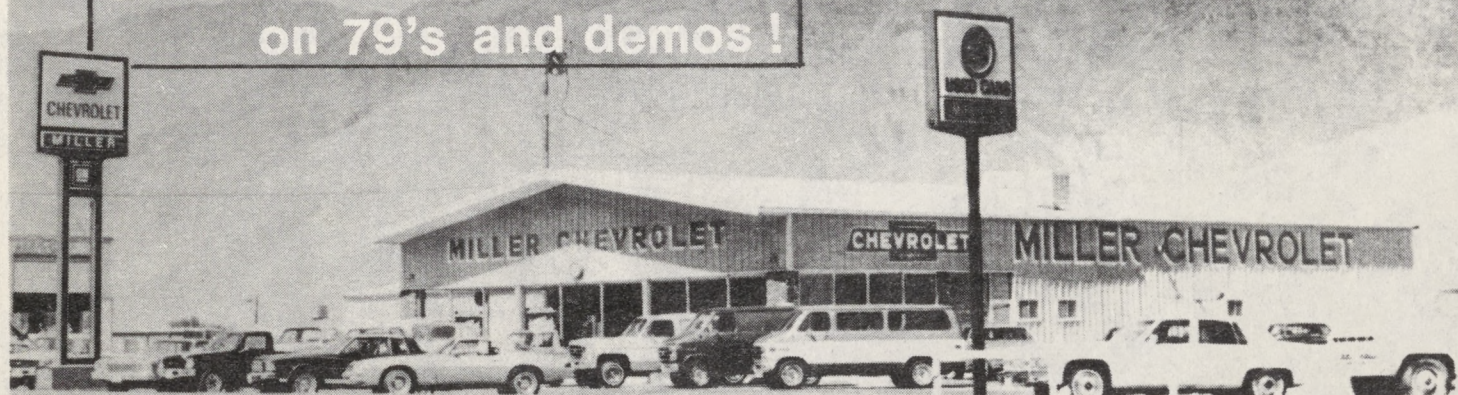
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Inyo's mauled and neglected kids

Parental harm to children is labeled under the catch-all category of "child abuse," but it includes beating, starving, locking in closets, general neglect and sexual assault or molestation. Law enforcement agencies and counsellors are alarmed by a sudden 600% increase in reported cases.

THE STATISTICS HAVE CHANGED, going from bad to awful in just a little over a year. For years, the matter of "child abuse" in Inyo County was a closet issue discussed, if at all, in muted tones. But with the new figures - a chilling increase of some 600% in reported cases - the criminal harm to the county's youngsters now prompts public meetings.

In 1978, there were only 17 cases of child neglect or abuse on the official record. In 1979, more than a 100 cases were reported. The county officers and counsellors who deal with such matters think maybe the actual number of abuses has not increased, but rather the number of *reported* cases. The court records for the year indicate that of all the cases filed at least 31 of the petitions to gain custody of abused children were substantiated. But officials point out that the figures do not preclude the existence of many more cases; as they say, evidence suitable for court cases is hard to get.

Why then the sudden increase in reported cases?

Officialdom agrees unanimously on that: media attention - television, radio and newspaper reports - has apparently brought the situation, which exists everywhere, into the public interest. People seem more willing to report cases where before abuse was a carefully concealed family secret. It may be, too, that the International "Year of the Child" project has focused more interest in what actually occurs in the lives of many children.

The county's probation department has some unhappy and sordid tales to tell - but is understandably reluctant to tell even a part of it. Even pornography has come to Inyo County, for instance; the use of six-year-olds for photos and films. (Unable to prove their case in a court of law, complainants dropped the charges.)

A probation department deputy, Jim Roberts, states flatly that there are cases of "desperate depravity." He described at least one case in which a malnourished infant was found in its crib "covered and surrounded by filth," another in which seven people were found living in a car with neglected infants - and still another in which a toddler in diapers was found wandering in the traffic of Bishop's Line Street (The mother routinely put the child outside and left it on its own; the baby also suffered severe sunburn from too much exposure.

But "child abuse" is not merely the problem among the poor. There have been cases of "even professional people" beating their kids, locking them in closets, or otherwise "getting them out of their way." Most of Inyo's "neglect" or "abuse" cases seem for one reason or another to come out of the southern part of the county, but other than "geographically" it is difficult to describe what Roberts called "the typical child abuser." Abuse as such crosses all racial, ethnic, economic and social lines and is found about equally in all.

"They are not freaks. They are not out of the ordin-



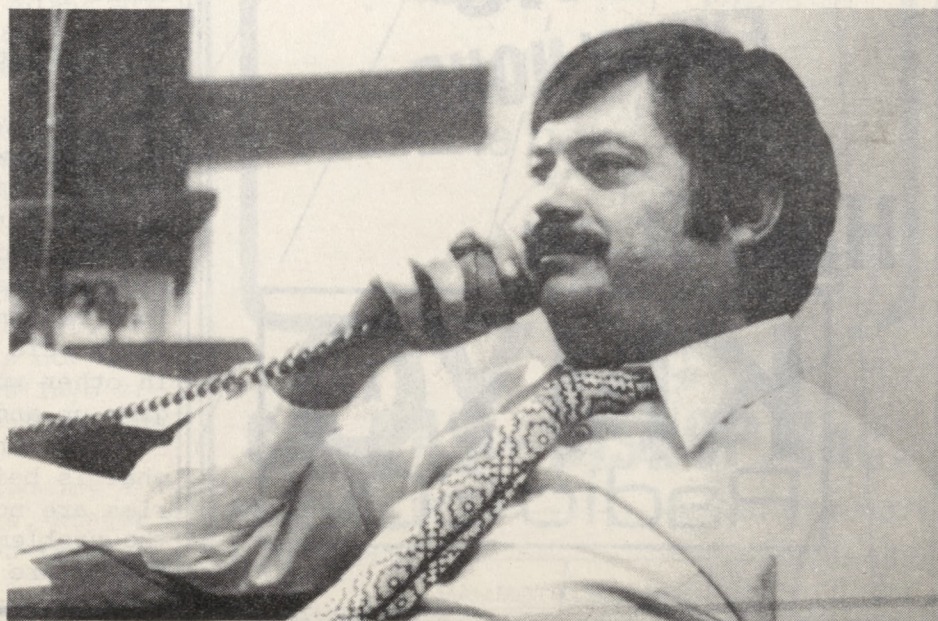
In Inyo County there are cases of what Probation Deputy Jim Roberts calls "desperate depravity." A deputy district attorney, Dennis Myers, made a number of calls and sent out memos to "interested" people who later formed a child abuse task force.

ary, not insane people. Many are ignorant or angry. They don't mean to hurt the child...but kids are an easy target. And then there are some people so hung up on themselves that their children are a low priority. They are more interested in going to a bar, or watching soap operas."

Photos: Benett Kessler

And what, Roberts was asked, seems to be the basic cause of other "priorities"? In answer, he touched on a social phenomenon that has seemingly become more apparent in the recent generations:

"Family values are gone, as well as moral standards. And children require a lot of self-sacrifice." And in that, Roberts pointed out that the lower strata of society has no monopoly on child abuse. "Reputable people in Inyo County have been referred to us in general neglect cases," he said. He said he thinks part of that problem is related to the current "upper class" philosophy that parents should allow their kids to do whatever they want - and to indulge the same gratifications of the older people. He cited two "upper strata" cases: Two girls, daughters of "professional" peo-



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ple. The girls had been sexually abused and beaten. Criminal charges were filed, the parents were fined - and put on probation. The girls were sent to foster homes. In another case involving (Bishop) professional people, children about five or six years old were locked in a closet for long periods of time - either to get them out of the way or as a kind of punishment. Some people, Roberts says, simply let their children wander anywhere. The out-of-sight-out-of-mind syndrome.

"We get anonymous reports. We investigate. Sometimes people get hostile; most try to resolve the problems without publicity. And the 'Three-hundred' petitions, as they called, that are filed in civil court do not require evidence beyond a reasonable doubt, but a "preponderance of evidence."

And if the children themselves can be believed, they had some surprises for Roberts one day last year when he was a speaker at Bishop's Home Street School. He said he asked how many of them had been physically abused or who knew some other child who was. He said a large majority had raised their hands. The question of what a child considers "abuse" - sometimes a mere spanking, for instance - was not defined.

The civil petition - "300" - is the usual filing procedure in such cases. It orders the children taken into temporary custody until a later hearing for full custody can be held. In that, Inyo's probation department has increasing problems. "We can't find enough foster homes. We need shelter care homes. Some law enforcement people themselves have taken kids home at times."

The abuse cases occur at a grinding, ongoing regularity - sometimes at some emotional cost to the people who must deal with them. "All abuse cases are hard to work at," says Roberts. When you see a serious abuse case, it's hard (for the worker) to cope with. The worker has to pick up the pieces somehow...but for the children, well, they are harmed and it will have some impact on them for the rest of their lives. In fact" - and here Roberts touched on a psychological fact of our society that has been long recognized - "in many cases abusive parents were themselves abused as children." In other words, kids who are abused tend to grow up and abuse their own offspring.

So what is the answer, if any, and what is being done? The answers to such queries are not easy to come by. But part of the problem is a public - and official - one. "There are those in the county hierarchy who are unaware of the extent of the problem.

And it is a probelm we are going to have to act on immediately. When we investigate and find a problem, we have to pull the child out of the home and sometimes (take him or her) to a hospital."

The problem may be financial - a part of the problem of the supervisors' reluctance to pay overtime to probation workers (See a report on that, Page 24). Asked if he thinks that is the case, Roberts gave only a terse "no comment," but he did admit to his feeling that he thinks "we could have a lot more support from the governing leaders."

What has happened in an effort to combat what appears to be a growing problem is the organization of a "Child abuse task force" that attempts to co-ordinate the work of law enforcement, probation, welfare, mental health, school, and city and county officials. In that, a deputy district attorney played a large role. He is Dennis Myers, a comparative newcomer to the county, having come here from Los Angeles where for five years he was employed in the county counsel's office and where for two of those years he worked exclusively on child abuse cases. Shortly after his arrival in Inyo County, he "asked around" to see what if any efforts were being made to help curb what has become a statewide issue. He recognized early-on the unhappy fact that Inyo's staid communities were not without their own closet abuse cases. He discovered "a lack" of either concern or activity. But he did discover "an interest" in working on it. He sent out 30 memos to various people, and a couple of meetings were held, one of them quite recently. The participants concluded that the county's efforts may now be fragmented, that the child abuse issue should be under the direction of one department. As it stands now, plans are underway to obtain state funding that would pay a child welfare worker to handle much or most of the problem.

Myers also stresses the importance, as he sees it, of training law enforcement people to properly handle abuse cases, to train teachers and medical people how to recognize and report cases, and the importance of educating the public, and encouraging the public, to report abuse and neglect cases.

But tattling on neighbors is not easy in a provincial atmosphere such as Inyo's; neighbors, as one person says, you have to live with a long time.

But if fear or reluctance abounds - so also do black eyes, bruises, burns, hunger and fractures among an unhappy and tragic number of the county's children.

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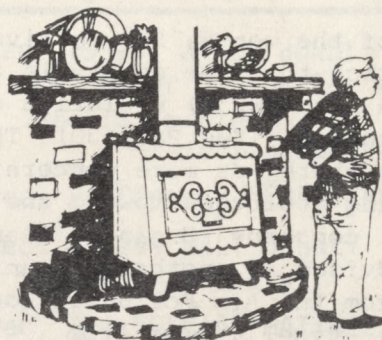
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News Briefs

THE ECONOMY: FOR INYO IT WAS A GOOD/BAD YEAR; LETTERS TO, AND FROM, DWP, PROVIDE SOME HEAVY WARNINGS; THE AERONAUTICS BOARD INVESTIGATES THE HARDING PLANE CRASH; A MONO GRAND JURY DROPS A NOISY BOMBSHELL INTO MONO COUNTY GOVERNMENT; A NEW PLANNING BOSS?

For water users the news from DWP is all bad

THOSE LETTERS from the Department of Water and Power contained something other than a Christmas greeting. The recipients - customers of DWP - were informed that in fact the water company plans to proceed immediately with its plan to bill them according to what is on their water meters; no more "flat rate" and no more fooling around either. Some water users have long complained that "something" - perhaps faulty meters - is wrong; that water bills up to \$150 and even \$400 are inaccurate. Not so, claims DWP. Meanwhile, any talk of high/low bills is to some valley residents a moot question anyway; they claim they'll pay no more than what they've been paying all along - until the public utilities commission lawsuit is settled.

And DWP got some bad news mail, too

NEAR THE FIRST of the month, DWP received - officially - notice that the county is going to crack down on its (DWP's) violation of a Bishop Cone injunction (See Page 30). Then on top of that one, there was more concerning DWP's freewheeling attitudes toward the valley's ecological concerns: Engineer Duane Georgeson was advised in another communication, this one from the Air Pollution Control District's Chuck Fryxell, that from here on in the department will have to get a permit, no less, to proceed with any more groundwater pumping. The permit would guarantee that pumping will have no significant impact on Inyo's air quality. It has been alleged that DWP's groundwater pumping activities has reduced the valley's plantlife and that the loss has created more than a few of the recurrent dust storms. APCD's letter was based on that agency's new "Rule 216," a rule that DWP attorneys had fought, and lost. The rule says, essentially, that "any" projects which could potentially create air pollution must prove in an air quality analysis that the project will not negatively affect the air, or no permit. And Fryxell now has asked Georgeson to submit a DWP application for such a permit, warning Georgeson that no one can proceed with a project without one.

All of which puts DWP on the spot to reduce its groundwater pumping rate to a "pre-project level." In DWP's case that amounts to about 10 cubic feet per second - a fraction of what DWP is pumping now. DWP does not face the new ruling alone, which to DWP's harried executives is probably no comfort. Also ordered to apply for a permit is an open-pit mining organization based in Paradise, California. That firm had planned to start work on a 260-acre site near Big Pine.

A new planning director - maybe

IF THE COUNTY WILL STOP HAGGLING over a difference of \$44 per month, and if all other questions are satisfactorily answered, then Inyo may soon have a new planning director. He is Tony Carston of Orange County, Cal., and he appears to be ready to accept the job if he can get \$2200 a month in salary. The county, still hung up in its penny-wise-pound-foolish policies, wants to pay only \$2156. As for Carston's qualifications, they seem to be in order - a fact discovered long after an early interview. Administrator John K. Smith said that in his view "Carston did not come across as strong as the board would have liked." But in an executive (closed) session after the interview, the board then decided to have Smith check into Carston's references and report back. Smith said, at last report, that he had checked on "one" reference which offered a "tremendous recommendation." Still unresolved, however, is that crucial matter of \$44 a month. (For more along those lines and the county's pay haggling, see the story which begins on Page 24).

A Mono grand jury charges conflicts of interest

TWO GRAND JURIES had investigated it, and a maverick news publication, *The Mountain Muckraker*, had pursued it. Finally, the 1979 Mono grand jury let it all hang out (It was perhaps a *modified, limited* hangout), but the essentials were all there: There was big trouble in Mono's halls of government. The result of investigations was a list of accusations lodged by the grand jury against

a Mono supervisor, Gene Hanson, and against Mono's district attorney, an office-holder of 20 years, Ed Denton. It all stemmed from a controversy over the Mammoth Airport. The jury claims, in essence, that Hanson was in a conflict of interest when he agreed to sell the airport to Mono County. It was reported that he is at least a "part-owner" of the airport facility. A report also has it that the Mono supervisors had authorized hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of improvements in the airport even though the county's purchase of the property had not yet cleared escrow proceedings.

And District Attorney Denton was accused under a special section of the Code which, in effect, says he failed to perform his proper duty by permitting the conflict of interest situation to arise in the first place.

If the accusations are proven true in the two cases, the two men involved could well be removed from office. They would lose accrued county pension benefits in that case. If on the other hand, they resign, such benefits will remain intact. For now, rumors are rampant in the area north of Sherwin Grade: to the effect that both plan to resign; that they have been asked to resign, etc. None of these has yet been substantiated - not, at least by the beginning of the new week.

The attorney general office has also been asked to look into the Mono mess.

As for the grand jury itself, it seems to be quite proud of its work. Said jury foreman John Garner: "It's really been an experience, quite an honor. I feel that we have accomplished something." But, in the long run Judge Harry Roberts will be the one to decide that when he holds a hearing on the issues on January 3.

Meanwhile, other Mono government problems were coming to light; also on the judge's agenda is a hearing for Josephine Pool, wife of the Mono County road commissioner, Dick Pool. In recent weeks she has been charged with embezzling funds from the county's general hospital - a complaint filed by the district attorney. Ms. Pool's attorney, Inyo

It was no Watergate issue - and *The Muckraker* is no *Washington Post* - but the little free handout news sheet had been reporting some of the airport problems all along. Somebody finally noticed.

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Harding crash investigation



Photo: Mike Moroch

The Mono Lake suit: DWP fights back

CHARGING THAT THE GOOD FOLKS OF MONO are in fact the culprits that have diverted Mono Lake's feedwaters causing it to dry up, the DWP has filed a countersuit against the Mono Lake Committee and the Audubon Society. That Mono issue is one that DWP doesn't want to lose, and L.A. officials have gone so far as to pressure the California delegation in Washington to line up on its side. The cross complaint, unlikely as it is, was seen by the lake's defenders as a last desperate effort to obfuscate the real issues: DWP's drain of the lake, destruction of the entire lake ecosystem and the destruction of the world's

second largest seagull rookery. But DWP now says that people living in the Lee Vining area near the lake are themselves the guilty parties - guilty of draining the springs that fed the lake. As it stands now, Judge Hillary Cook of Alpine County was to rule on the motion sometime late this week.

The Harding plane crash: A lot of questions unanswered

"HE NORMALLY CAME OUT ON SUNDAY to fly his plane. That Sunday was no different...I was going to ask him if I could ride with him, but someone else turned up to help him pull his plane out of the hangar - and I didn't go." And so it was a mere change of mind that may have saved the life of a Bishop Airport worker Don Partridge. Partridge was being questioned by a reporter about the findings, if any, in the investigation into the crash that killed Bishop Businessman Bob Harding more than a week ago. Partridge recounted

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that he had talked with Harding, owner of the Big Pine Trucking Company, "for about twenty minutes" prior to the crash which occurred shortly after Harding's takeoff. "He seemed in good health and in good spirits," said Partridge. "I watched him taxi out on the runway. He took off, took a right turn and climbed strong. He went left over Laws. I would say he was about three to five thousand feet above the valley floor. Then, the next thing I knew some people who had just landed wanted to know what all the smoke was. I tried to contact him by radio...but he was down." What happened to Harding? There is as yet no "official" word on the investigation. But, unofficially, it was learned from a reliable source that investigators of the National Transportation Safety Board have completed their investigation into the crash

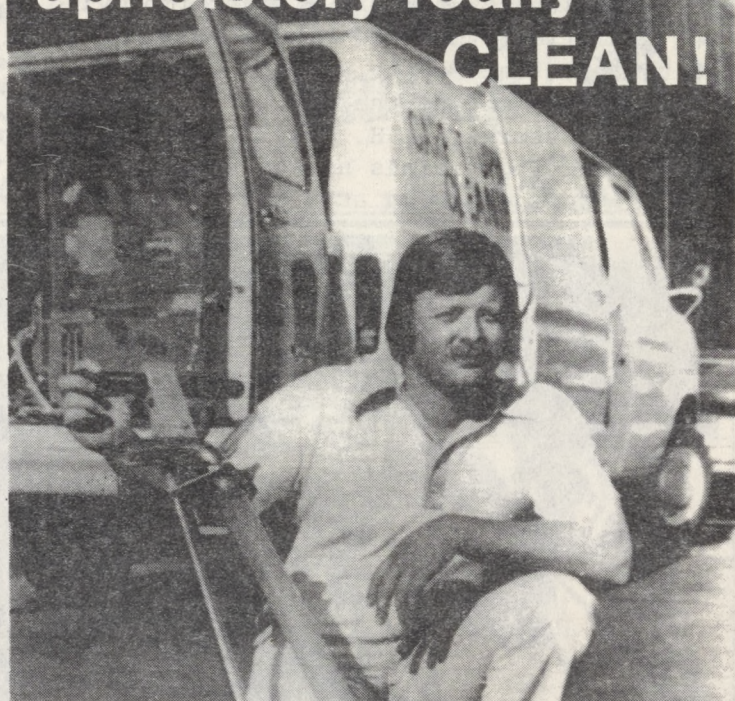
and that an examination of the planes engines revealed that at the time of the mishap they were *developing* power. One eyewitness to the crash had reported to the local newspaper that he thought he had heard some sort of engine trouble or failure. Asked what he thought had happened, Partridge indicated that "it may" have been "a medical problem," such as a heart attack or other seizure. But, as Partridge added, "No one may ever know what happened." An official report of the investigation will be due in about 90 days. As the aeronautics board completed its preliminary queries into the crash, the victim was laid to rest at Bishop. He was 56 years old and in the decade preceding his death he had built up and expanded the trucking company he had purchased in 1968. Outgoing, friend-

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ly, and as many friends attested, honest in his dealings, he left a considerable mark on the community. At the simple graveside service, a friend and fellow worker offered a brief eulogy. Surviving him are his wife, Lucie, a son, Todd, his mother, Rowena Tanner, a brother and two grandsons.

Ted and TV service: A continuing controversy

INDEPENDENCE TV CABLE ENTREPRENEUR Ted Higel says he got at least part of what he wanted out of the recent cut-off of all of the community's cable service - about \$1000. Higel said fewer than a fourth of his customers had paid their television bills. The viewers on the other hand were arguing that they would not pay cable bills until Higel upgraded his service, that Independence's TV reception was of poor quality and that often there was none at all. In any case Higel turned the system off - after improving the amplifiers that had been at the heart of the trouble. People started paying up. But that may not be the end of it; Inyo's district attorney, L.H. "Buck" Gibbons (and other county officials hooked up to Higel's cables) were miffed at Higel's abrupt

turn-off. Gibbons said last week that "any day" he could file a misdemeanor charge against Higel for operating the system without a county franchise - but that probably he won't since nobody else wants to operate the system anyway. Of the official complaints, Higel says they're so much sour grapes - that among the customers that have not paid up is Gibbons himself who according to Higel owes for "several months" service. But that may not be the end of it; The Independence Civic Club has begun a campaign for a translator system that would provide eight channels - to be paid for by a tack-on to property taxes.

It was a good/bad year for business, depending on who you're talking to

NOT JUST EVERYBODY IN BUSINESS was eager to talk about it; merchants and bankers are notoriously secretive about what's in their cash register tills at the end of the day; but the valley's tourist-dependent economy may have taken a serious dive in 1979. On several weekends during the year, the tourists failed to show up, a phenomenon attributed mostly to on-again-off-again gas crises. And now, when things should be going



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great, the ski slopes to the north remain discouragingly short of snow. And as the Bishop Chamber of Commerce manager, Denton Sonke, points out, it's not the motel-cafe people only that are hurting, although to some extent they form a base for Inyo's complex web of economy. Says Sonke: "The laundry, for instance, loses business when the motel trade is down," as do other business houses that are largely dependent on each other. But Sonke and some business people insist - with usual seller's optimism - that Bishop "had a very good year." The retail figures go something like this: business was down by 16% in May; 11% in June and 8-10% in July. There were some increase in August-September - but the current slump is steep and rocky as a ski slope with no snow. Sonke - again the gung-ho C-of-C optimist - said "We did better than most resort areas because they're too far away from the Los Angeles market. We're only 275 miles from L.A., and Inyo is the first area to provide the Alpine experience." At the southern entrance - "Lone Pine, Gateway to the Beautiful Owens Valley" - things were not so great. The Forest Service recorded a 20% drop in visitors. But Lone Pine Chamber Manager Pat Farlander says business itself "was not down

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Catering service

that much." Over the valley, the various banking houses - always the places to get a true picture of local economy - were silent in the matter of how things are really going. Requests for bank deposit estimates are routinely turned down, or referred to "our L.A. office." But indications, privately hinted at, are that deposits are in fact down considerably. Another indicator of the economy - here and elsewhere - is that shown in car sales figures. Americans, Inyoans included, tend to buy cars when the income is right and the credit situation is right. In Inyo - again, as elsewhere - the pattern for 1979 was a standard one: Sales of big gas-guzzlers were down; sales of economy cars were up - and domestic makes took a dive as the imports had the best market. Says Richard Perry of Bishop's Perry Motors: "Economy is on their minds." At Lone Pine, Steve Jones of Miller's Chevrolet said that his first year in business "was an outstanding business year - but there is more emphasis on economy cars."

And how is the Christmas season affecting retail sales? A long-time favorite gift emporium at Bishop - Roy's Jewelers - is apparently suffering the no-snow blues. Says Owner Roy Heslington: "Prices are high due to inflation...and when we're having Palm Springs weather, it's not conducive to buying Christmas presents." Another factor in Inyo's 1979 business year was the advent of new businesses; retailers are sharing the dollars that are now spread thinner. Conder's, one of the county's old-line, long-established department stores, is experiencing some of that slump. "The new businesses had an impact. They took a little of the business away," says Conder's Manager Ivan Needham.

As for real estate transactions, well, the national problem has affected Inyo County. There are buyers and bargains, but getting the two together is another thing. High loan interest rates have slowed things down a lot. Earlier, there was a good indication that properties - particularly homes - would move well, but recent weeks have shown a definite slow-down. At Bishop's Red Carpet Realtors, Lee Baun said her firm closed more than \$6 million in total sales - that home sales were "outstanding" - but now that interest rates have soared (1977, 9½-10½% - 1978-79, 12-14%), home sales have taken a corresponding fall. Inyo-Mono Bank President Don Bickle agrees: "Home loans are about

❁ **Happy New Year**

dead. Nobody's taking them." Home buyers' payments must be set at schedules much too high for the wage-earner. Sales of businesses may be another thing. Business sales make up some 75% of Baun's gross - and in Bishop particularly the transfer of business ownerships has been brisk. Baun says that "a new group of people in their thirties and forties are getting into business here. Many of them are coming in from out of the area."

The view of the economy - even from the banks - is mixed. On Monday of this week the Bank of America at Los Angeles, basing its view on current affairs, said along with other economy-watchers that the US is in for continued slumps, at least until 1981. Inyo-Mono's Don Bickle has another view: "Generally," the bank had "a good year. Deposits held well," and the bank is "ahead by three million dollars during the same time frame as last year."

There were further contradictions among business houses offering essentially the same goods and services: Some prospered, and others did less well. A case in point is that of two "True-Value" hardware outlets. At Lone Pine, Gardener's Home and Sports Center enjoyed yet another "good year" - due probably to Owner Gwen Gardener's strong and compelling advertising throughout the year. Gardener says he has had good results with a saturation of radio spots - and that his advertised promise "Gardener's has it" (or, as it is implied, well get it), suggests to the listener a service-oriented store. Another True-Value store at Bishop experienced another kind of year. Owner John Young said the year was "slower...a different kind of year." His own store is much larger, offers more parking area, is more modern throughout than Gardener's. Young said he thinks the first gasoline shortage created what he calls a kind of local panic, that "there were some self-created problems due to fear." Young said he thinks business, overall, was down by as much as 30%.

Where then was it really good?

At the travel service! Business was literally up in the air (despite the year's numbing reports of plane crashes), as Inyo's globetrotters took off for just about everywhere. Nancy Varnum of High Sierra Travel Service (Bishop), said it was a "successful" travel year, pointing out that it may be cheaper to fly than to go by car.

Maybe the local travellers were taking off on vacations for another reason: They just wanted to get away from the confusion. It was, after all, a good/bad year. ■

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PRE-DESERT

This is the way it was

The Owens Valley was not always a desert. Before L.A.'s drain of its water, the valley was green and productive.

For awhile, co-existence with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power was tolerable; enough water remained for use by the valley's extensive agriculture. As the photographs here indicate, lush fields were common - but that was before L.A.'s rapid growth and its consequent demand for water. And today, in defense of its groundwater pumping, some L.A. officials attempt to convince present-day residents and visitors that the valley was "always" a desert.

TOP PHOTOS COURTESY OF BEN RANDOLPH

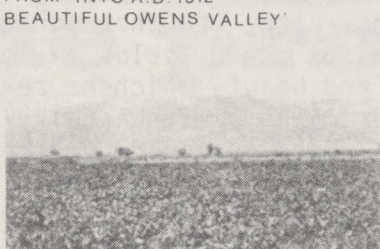


Truck farming in Inyo prospered well into the 1930's. These are onions near Lone Pine.



As proud "farmers," these Owens Valley women - Nina Taylor, Elsa Reiman and Pamela Butler - posed for a picture in a lush field on the Spainhower Ranch. The year was 1931, and although there were harsh "troubles" with DWP, enough water flowed to maintain fields and orchards. But even then, the heyday of valley agriculture was passing, and sage was replacing wheat. For a look at an even better day and the man who deftly recorded it, A.A. Forbes, turn the page.

FORBES PHOTOS
FROM 'INYO A.D. 1912
BEAUTIFUL OWENS VALLEY'



ROW CROPS



HILLSIDE ORCHARDS



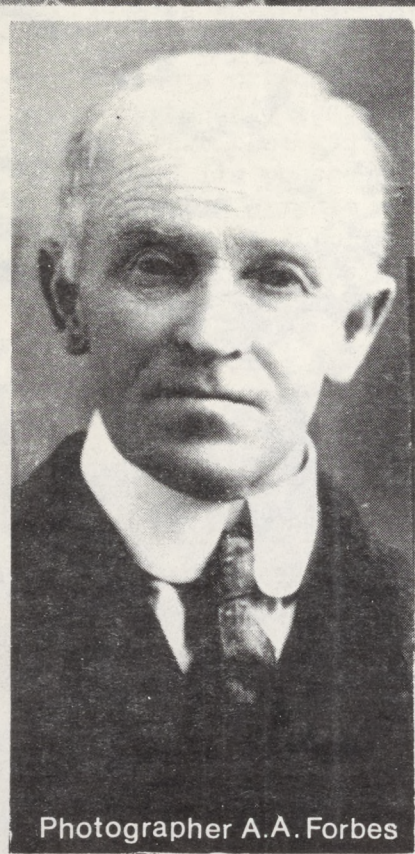
IRRIGATED FIELDS



CORN 8 FEET TALL



Courtesy of
J. McLaren
Forbes



Photographer A.A. Forbes

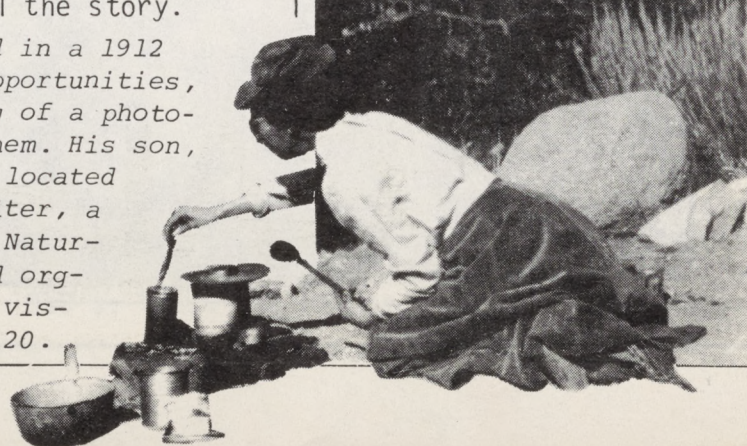
Photo record of the Way it Was

Wandering photographer

He came as a wanderer to what he called a "verdant valley." In the nearby mountains, among the Indians, along the thoroughfares and in its green fields he found drama and beauty which he recorded lovingly with a bulky camera. Disillusioned by "the water company," he packed up and left one day in 1916. Two interviews tell the story.

With his wife Mary he
camped in the Sierra
and by the valley's
streams.

With an interest aroused by photos discovered in a 1912 magazine promoting the valley's wealth and opportunities, News-Letter traced as best it could the story of a photographer, Andrew Alexander Forbes, who made them. His son, Jay McLaren Forbes, a retired geologist, was located at Reno, Nevada. Another source was Nancy Walter, a research associate at Los Angeles' Museum of Natural History. Walter is even now collecting and organizing Forbes' work, and she makes frequent visits to the valley. Their stories are on Page 20.

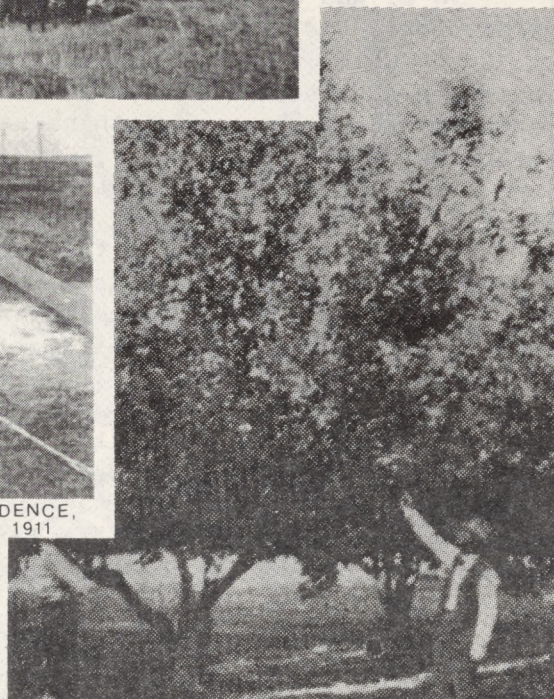


Forbes' camera recorded
a well-watered valley.



NEAR INDEPENDENCE,
1911

Now, flow-
ing wells
take water
to L.A.
(Page 30)



Few of Forbes' original photos are available for repro-
duction here or elsewhere. Only about 10% of his remain-
ing work is in "print" form; the rest of it is made up
of glass negatives now in museum collections. Prints on
these pages were re-screened from published material.

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Forbes left the valley, disillusioned. . .

"...The L.A. water company was coming on strong. My parents weren't happy about it."

FROM HIS HOME AT RENO, the wandering photographer's son talked to a *News-Letter* reporter. He offered revealing insights into the life of his father and mother, and a view of conditions - and DWP influence - in the valley in pre-1910 days. Excerpts of the interview follow:

News-Letter: What kind of man was your father?

Forbes: He was well-liked. But remember, he died when I was eleven.

N-L: Why did your family leave the Owens Valley?

F: I think maybe the altitude bothered my mother...and the L.A. water company was coming on strong; my parents weren't happy about it. My mother told me that she sold forty acres, I think around Big Pine, to L. A., for the amount the taxes were assessed at in 1910.

N-L: Why did she sell?

F: Well, the water company (DWP) would go in and if you had a good drainage water right they bought up key ranches - and then

the people below, without water, would have to sell.

N-L: Was your father ill? Do you know what caused his death?

F: Well, we moved down south before nineteen-eighteen...There was an auto accident that shook him up...I think he had heart problems.

N-L: Where did he have his studio up here?

F: His studio was on the alley next to where the Volkswagen shop is now. He had a boardwalk out front. The Indians used to sit out there while he took their pictures. They liked him.

N-L: Was he active in the community?

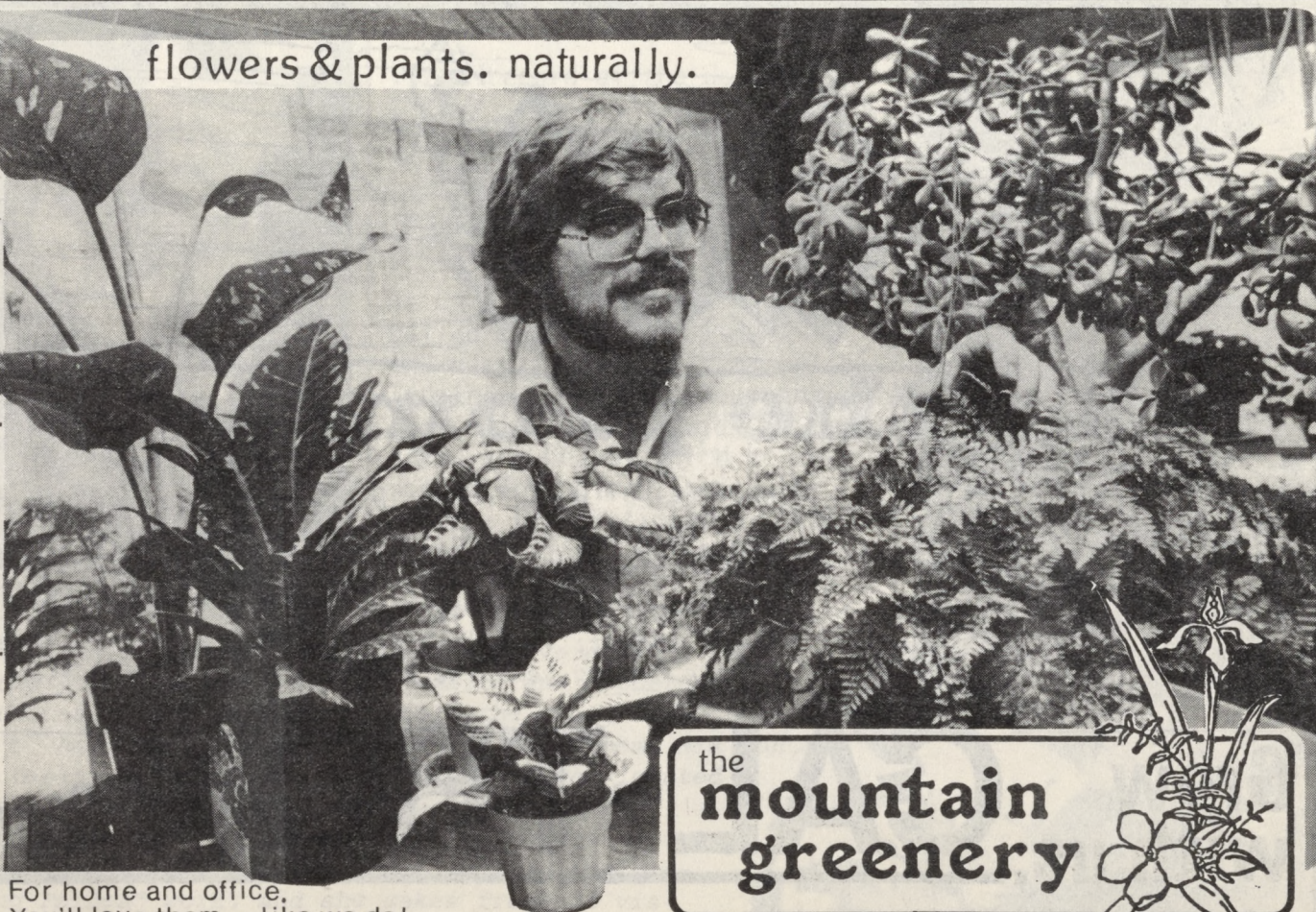
F: I understand he liked to act in the minstrel shows and plays. He once took up with a Negro cowboy just to learn the dialect. Some people criticized him for that, but he would try anything to learn what he needed to know.

N-L: What kind of camera did he use?

(See Forbes, Page 22)

flowers & plants. naturally.

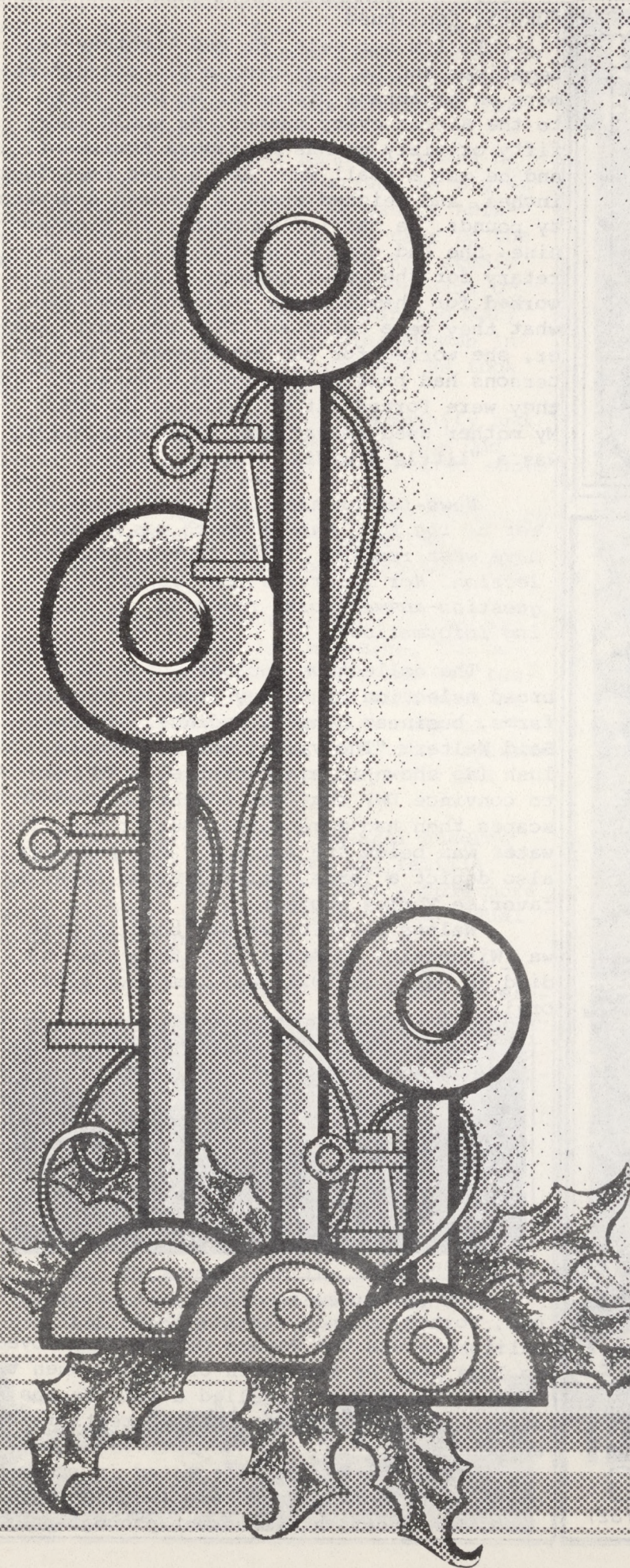
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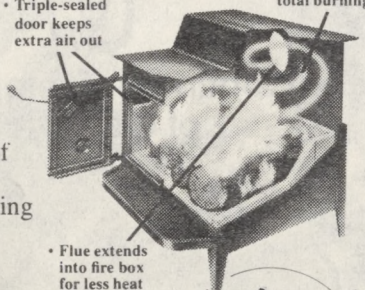
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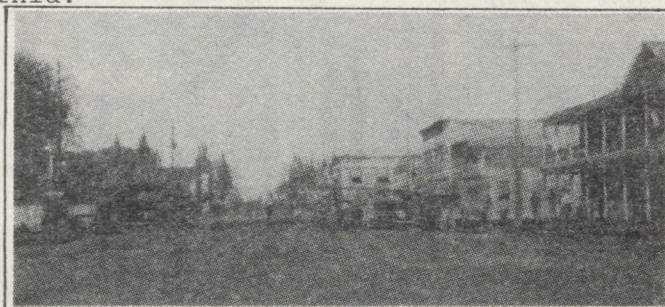
FORBES, Continued

F: I'm not sure. He had eight-by-ten negatives and he also used a big circuit camera on panorama pictures. He used to go in to the Sierra every summer. He would carry fifty or sixty pounds of camera equipment... and he was a small man, about five feet four inches, and weighed about a hundred and twenty pounds. He married my mother in nineteen-nine. She had come to Bishop and was a secretary for the water company, the DWP. She worked for them for one year and then saw what they were doing and then she quit. Later, she worked for the Wattersons. (The Wattersons had banking and other interests, and they were forced out of business by DWP.) My mother used to say that the Owens Valley was a "little Arcadia."

News-Letter also contacted Nancy Walter of the L.A. Museum which was known to have what remains of the Forbes photo collection. Her interview, not reported in question-answer form, revealed the following information:

The collection includes, mostly, a broad selection of valley life at the time; farms, business houses, Indians, scenery. Said Walter: "The valley was a lot more lush (as shown) in his pictures. It's hard to convince DWP that the sagebrush landscapes then had more water. But it did. The water was below the surface." The pictures also depict a large, brimful Owens Lake, a favorite Forbes subject.

Walter said Forbes was born in Ottawa, Wisconsin, on April 21, 1862; that he died in March of 1921 near Lompoc, California.



BISHOP 1912 - Forbes

"When Forbes was two or three years old, Forbes and his parents travelled to California via the Panama Canal. They moved to Iowa when he was seven or eight, then to Kansas. He always travelled a lot. He was also a cowboy. In Kansas, his parents raised cattle.

"Somehow he got interested in photography, but nobody knows who taught him.

"He became an itinerant photographer.

He got a dramatic shot of the Cherokee Strip...with all the wagons lined up for the (start of the) Oklahoma land rush. He traveled from town to town in his buckboard taking portrait photos.

"It's unknown what kind of camera he used, but he used glass negatives as big as eight-by-ten, and smaller. He was in Arizona, New Mexico, California. He came to the Owens Valley in 1902 and set up his studio in Bishop. He talked about "the verdant Owens Valley" of that time. He married Mary Rozette Brutsman, a young businesswoman in Bishop. Bishop was a home base and he took photos all over the valley.

"He was involved in his community and in the church. He was a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge, and he acted in minstrel shows and local plays.

"He took aerial photos of the valley by trying to suspend his camera on kites.

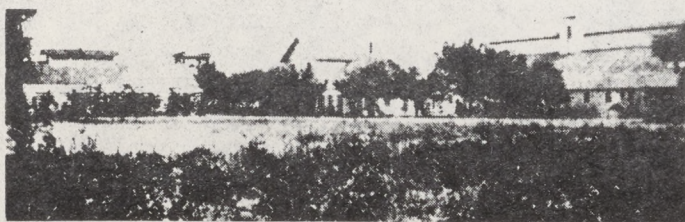
"He also took a lot of trips into the mountains."

Much of the photographer's work was included in a promotion magazine, The Owens Valley, Anno Domini 1912, and his business was booming. But faced with what he saw as the destruction and takeover of his adopted homeland, he left. The magazine had written a prophetic message for its readers:

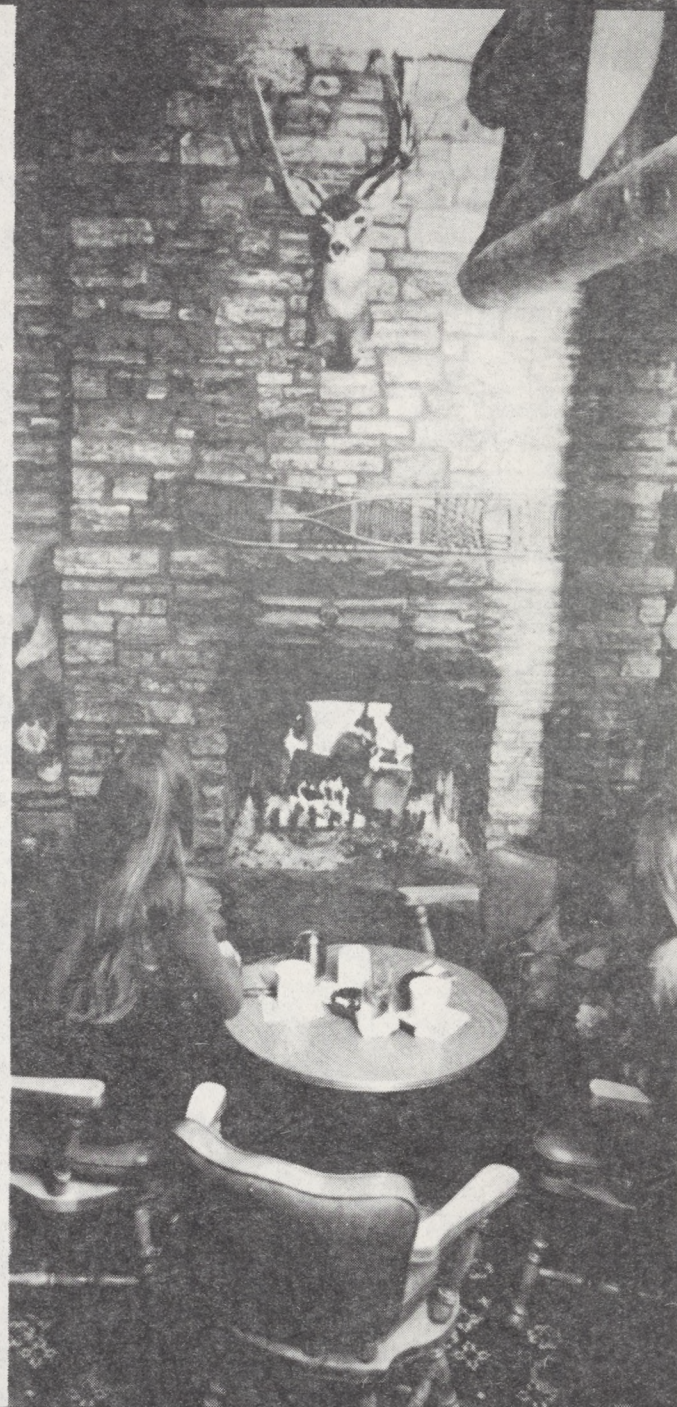
"...(The valley's) several hundred thousand acres of land are all fertile, and it is blessed with a water supply more generous than is given to any other equal area in California...

"...But there is little encouragement to offer the seeker for vacant government land. A peculiar distortion of national laws was used to justify the withholding of hundreds of thousands of acres as alleged 'forest,' though it was level valley land. ...In February of last year (1911), a presidential proclamation directed the restoration of entry of such lands...but through one thin pretext or another the land...is withheld from entry..."

As DWP moved into the "withheld" land, Forbes and his family packed their gear and, like many others, moved out. ■



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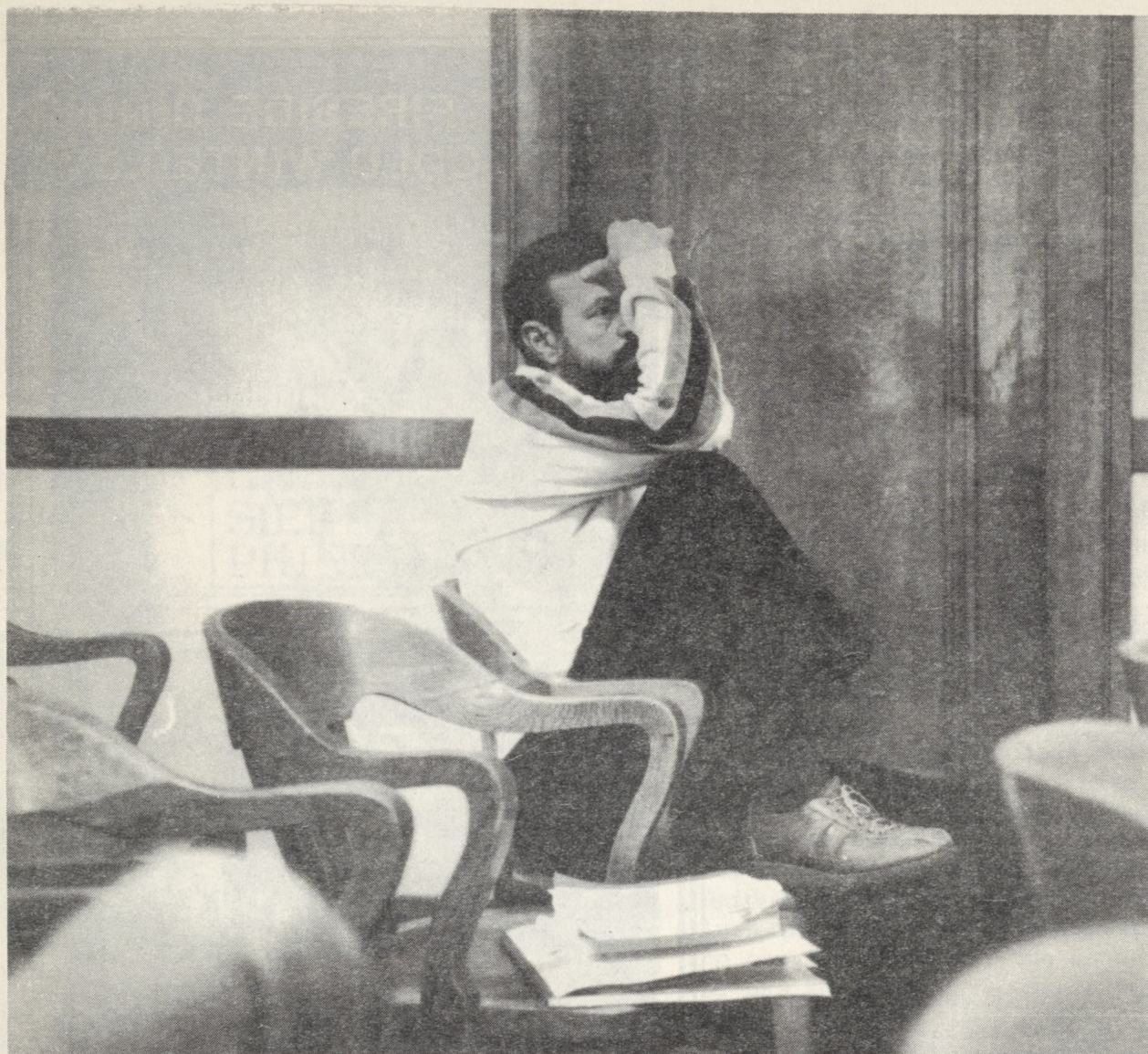
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Text and Photos by
Benett Kessler



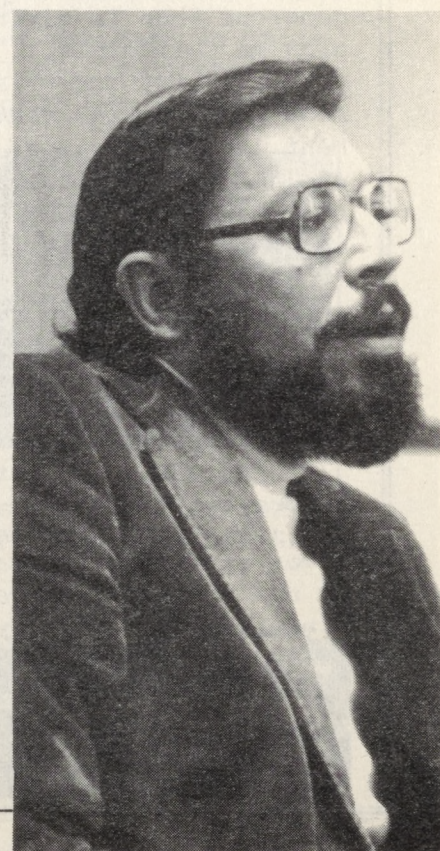
Considered by many to be one of the county's ablest departmental directors, Welfare's Norman Paulson went to bat for one of his top workers. He won. Fatigued, he listened to the arguments of others who compete for their own share. Below, County Psychiatrist Leo Pisculli argues that he had no pay increase in five years.

The lonely battle for county dollars

A COUNTY WAGE
SURVEY SPARKS
STILL MORE
CONTROVERSY

Money. It is the lifeblood of government bureaucracy. It is power, status, political clout. It is personnel, paperwork, and projects. And if the projects somehow appeal to the whims, prejudices and personal quirks of the higher-ups, pay and promotions are in order for the buck-seekers. Pay and personnel are the focal point of yet another flareup in county controversy - and money is the name of the game.

HARDLY ANYONE wanted it, few seem to know what to do with it now that they've got it. And it cost a lot. It is a survey by the state, ordered up by the board of supervisors early this year to match up the county's dollars with the county's workers. Now, nobody will admit that they wanted the survey, conducted by the state bureaucracy and costing Inyo taxpayers \$20,000, in the first place. The cost goes far beyond dollars; employee and department head morale has recently taken still another dive and everybody is once again demanding, pleading, debating and arguing over who gets what. It is a lonely, sometimes pitiful battle...



Pitiful in the sense that money-grubbing is a demeaning exercise, at least for the county's best, most energetic and hard-working department heads. For many of these, county politics and power plays - which lie at the heart of every budget battle - are the very barriers to just about everything they feel they should be doing as real public servants. Many of them were doing very well - and then came along the 'bureaucrats from Sacramento, brought in by the county supervisors at great expense, to "survey" their operations and personnel. And the money hassle, forgotten since budget time, became once again a time-wasting, unproductive battle. Last week, they all met with the administrator (who claims he didn't want the survey in the first place), and with the supervisors - to plead their cases.

The first cost of the survey - \$20,000 - was just for starters. Another \$14,000 went for wage increases in certain areas, and yet more will be spent in months to come. A number of workers and department heads now wonder why the \$20,000 wasn't used for needed pay increases in the first place. Even some officials privately believe the survey is to a great extent irrelevant to conditions here.

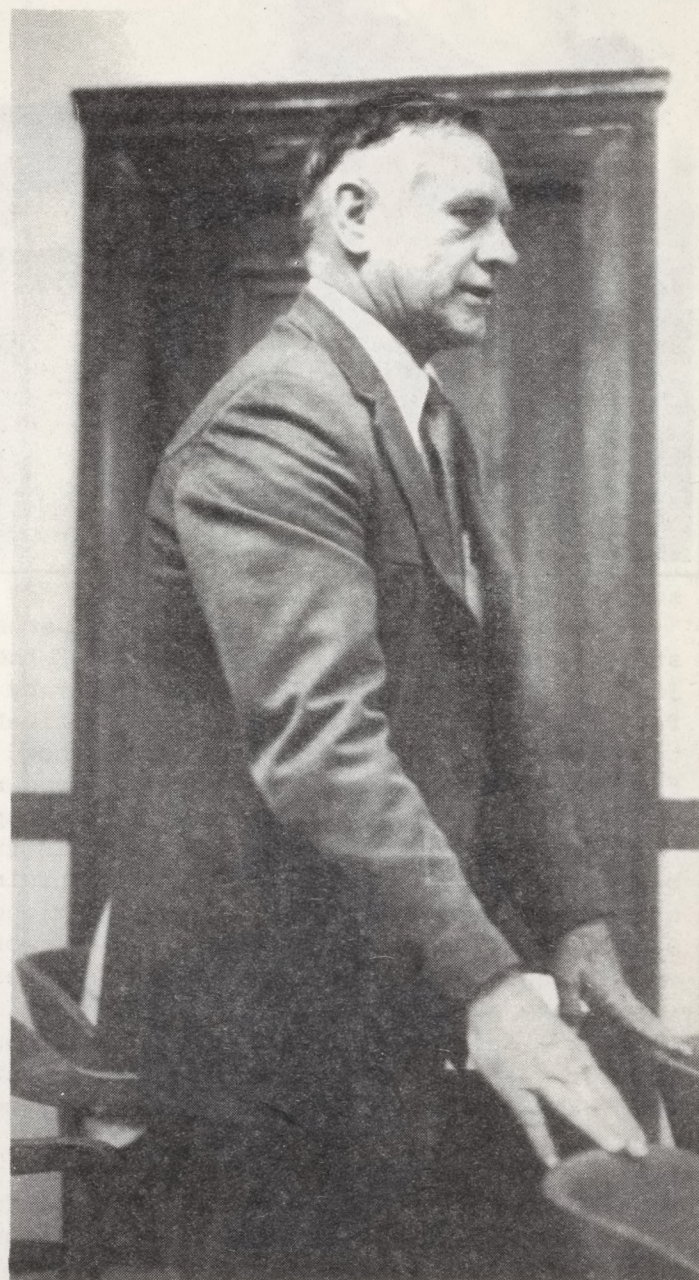
The county administrator now says that he was "very much against it from the beginning." John K. Smith also claims that it was ordered only after the employees and officials associations "virtually demanded" it.

Not so, say the spokesmen, past and present, of those organizations, although few if any were willing to openly dispute the word of the administrator. Smith said the employees association took him on, claiming that he had been less than objective about job-salary matters in the county. But present and past officials of the association deny now that anyone ever wanted a "survey," and that all had been against it. Most of the members of the county officials' organization were in fact dead set against it, seeing it as an expensive waste of time.

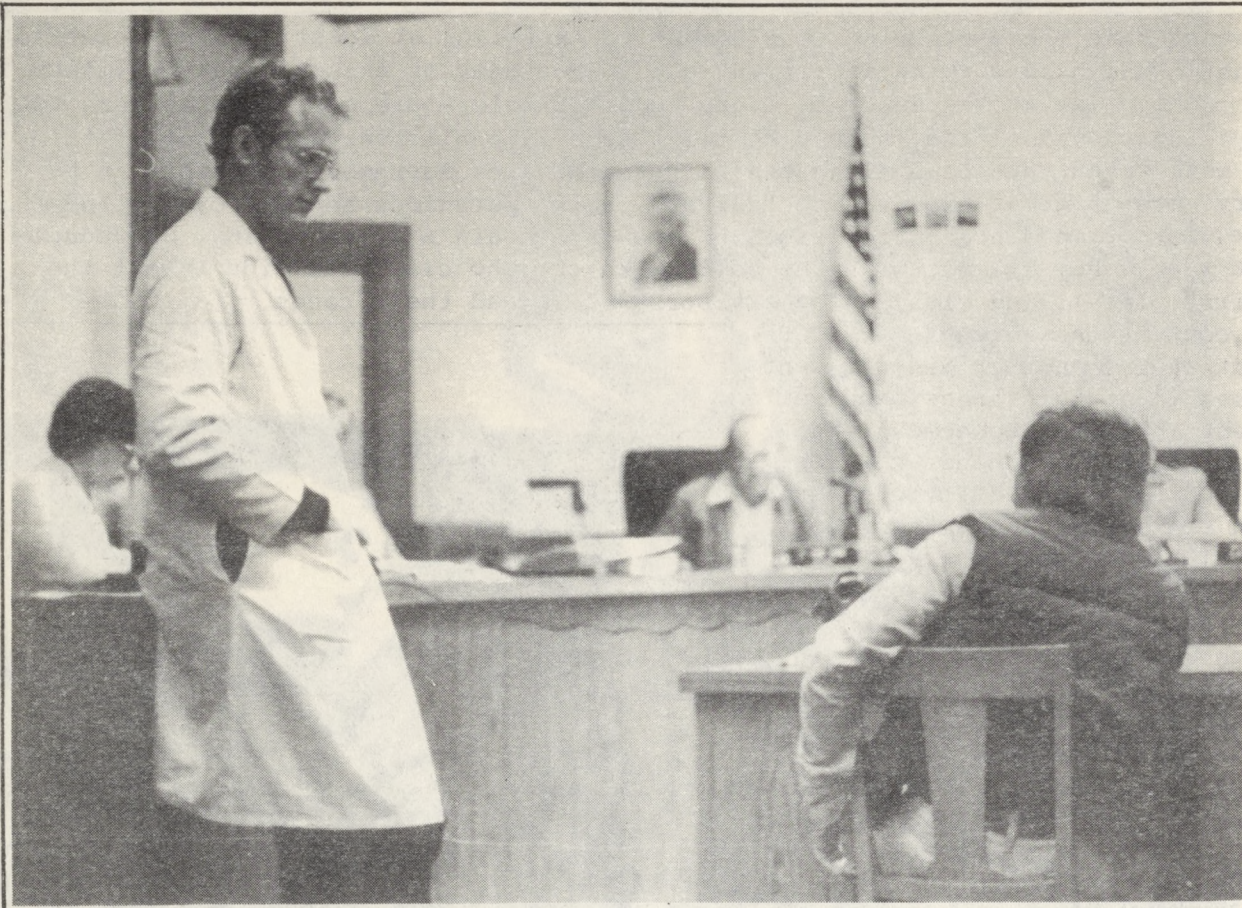
So why did it happen at all? No one is quite sure about that, but what most people are now sure of - in 20/20 hindsight - is that the "California Personnel Survey" conducted by the state recommended a number of pay cuts, or, at best, *status quo* situations, for a number of county positions that had long shown a need for a boost. The state, in short, had attempted to place Inyo's workers and their jobs in "nice, convenient, little squares" based on work situations in counties far removed from the realities of Inyo's own courthouse truths. As a consequence, no fewer than 40 protests were lodged.

In explanation, the man from CPS did not much want to talk about it. According to County Treasurer Fred Flowers, the CPS representative told him "The quantity and quality of work done by the employees is not important. We're only surveying the requirements of the positions." *Not important, the "quantity and quality" of the county's work production?* What then would justify a survey?

In answer, one supervisor explained that an "in-house" survey - conducted by the administrators office - would have been questioned even more severely by county employees who think the administrator might have played favorites. But her view of the state survey was



Probation officer Lee. Some concessions.



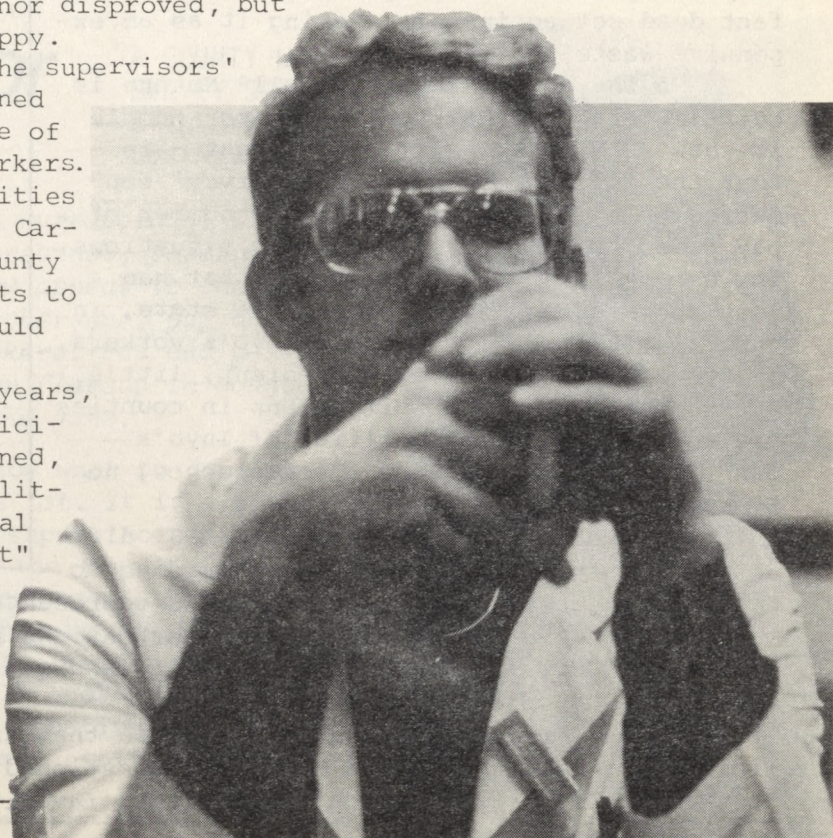
"No need," said Health Officer Dr. George Kibler, for "layers" of supervision. His remarks came after the county psychiatrist claimed Kibler should not be in charge of the mental health office. After he talked - striding back and forth in the boardroom - Kibler relaxed with a cup of coffee.

somewhat less than positive. Says she: "It was a dismal failure."

Even though some officials, and perhaps some employees, felt that a state survey might be more "objective," the final resulting survey nonetheless underwent some local touching up - by the administrator's office. That fact gave rise to more than a little private speculation that the administrator managed to get in his licks anyhow. Whether there was any "playing favorites" or not could be neither proved nor disproved, but in any case a lot of people were left unhappy.

And so last week, they gathered in the supervisors' boardroom to hash it all out. Most complained about demotions (and the consequent decline of morale) among some of the county's best workers. One witness to the county's proposed inequities - a spunky sheriff's department secretary, Carol Hook - said "I enjoy working for the county and for the sheriff, and if the county wants to keep good employees, it seems like they would want to pay for their work."

Hook's was not a new complaint. For years, many workers who have been regarded as efficient, intelligent, hard-working, have resigned, or been forced out of their jobs in the politics of the county administration's whimsical hiring-firing-paying policies. "Intelligent" may in fact be the operative word; the administration has shown itself to favor the uncreative, fawning types that give knee-jerk responses to whatever political or personality winds are blowing at any given time. And in that, the administrator's office has had more than a little critic-



ism, much of it richly deserved.

The issue now, in these days of pinched budgets, is how to make county government function - at all. Most department heads who try to accomplish anything (and there are a few) feel that present-day demands on government leave no room for politics-as-usual. A naive hope, perhaps, since who wants in government anyway unless power - or money - is the reward? And who wants or conducts "surveys" - any old surveys - if there is no room for a little personal tinkering to bend it this way or that?

Administrator Smith spent three days, at least, trying to placate the unhappy department heads. Not with a lot of luck. Some succeeded in holding on to their diminishing dollars; some did not.

Three associate planners (now hard at work on the county's critical general plan update) had been set for cutbacks. Smith averted that morale-destroying idea. By cutbacks is meant no real salary decreases, but rather the withholding of future merit increases, some of which may be long past due. One of the complainants, Dr. Leo Pisculli of the county's mental health office, told the board he's never had a merit increase, that he works now for the same salary he started with five years ago. He also brought in another issue: He no longer heads the mental health office; its direction was placed under the new health officer, Dr. George Kibler, a competent doctor, but no psychiatrist. "It's not right," said Pisculli. "He is not a mental health professional."

Clearly, the "survey" problem has raised some spin-off issues, and old unspoken complaints are now surfacing.

There was some good news among the bad. One department head who has had to do constant battle with current social realities without much help from the board is Inyo's probation officer, John Lee. In a day of increasing delinquency, particularly juvenile delinquency, his work has doubled and tripled. For months, Lee has wanted overtime pay for his workers trying to handle the caseload. His pleas fell on deaf ears since his office (like that of mental health) is one of those that nobody likes to think about or admit a need of except to put society's outcasts away somewhere out of sight...

The board had been particularly unsympathetic to the fact that probation officers make emergency calls, sometimes late at night. Under the approved salary survey, Lee people will now work a 40-hour week (Many departments actually work 35 hours) and be paid

HAVE A HAPPY HOLIDAY

(But
remember
that
she
won't)



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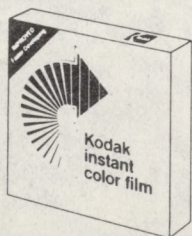
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for it. But overtime is still out. The deputy officers were also elevated in pay-range to approximately that of some sheriff's officers.

The survey issue also raised another long-standing complaint - this aimed at the county administrator himself. From many and varied sources came the complaint (privately to newsmen) that Smith's own office help gets better pay than those in comparable jobs in other departments. Asked about that, Smith said he had "called up" other department heads to "ask them" if they thought his staff was better paid. If Smith is to be believed, "only one" told him of a complaint on that score. (Why, after all, upset the undisputed boss of the county government?)

But one hesitated not at all: The county's district attorney, L.H. "Buck" Gibbons who in recent years has built a considerable political base of his own. In Smith's own words, it went this way: "I called up the department heads (about charges reported in the media about favored pay in Smith's office) to ask them if they felt it were true. Only one did. That was Buck Gibbons. He has always aligned himself against me on this. It's an on-going debate."

If Smith's calls to department heads were calculated to give him accurate information, or if he expected honest answers, he hasn't been hearing the gripes that go - privately of course - to practically everybody else.

And so go the hassles in all county government. The politicians usually favor those projects or people that show clear bread-and-butter results: roads, (sometimes) law enforcement - the departments in short that provide voter-pleasing tangibles. Often, the problems come up in areas dealing with unpopular issues: planning, (which many people feel is unnecessary unless a business house wants to move in next door); mental health that nobody wants to talk about; probation ("They should just send the crooks off to jail anyway."); library ("Who needs books? We've got television and Little House on the Prairie"); welfare ("Just free money for people too lazy to work"), etc.

The result is the creation and perpetuation of mediocrity at best, and favored-project-favored-friends at worst, with little or no help to those who may otherwise be outstanding public servants.

Meanwhile there was a survey of all U.S. county government reported in *Reader's Digest*. Its conclusions: high level work in 25% of employees; mediocrity in 50%; and 25% hardly worth paying at all.

AND AT LEAST ONE COUNTY WORKER QUIT BECAUSE OF THE "SURVEY" ISSUE:
"IT WAS THE LAST STRAW," SAID A FORMER MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

The staff in Public Works had long since begun to dwindle. As a consequence, other workers carried the workload, often getting behind. One of these was Don Black who labored at several jobs there, including keeping up on the assessor's maps. For his efforts, Black earned \$1200 per month, approximately. For a long time he had asked for a raise; finally, he became discouraged. Then the survey by the state recommended that he get no raise. "That was the last straw," he said, and he quit.

Then the county needed someone to do the job(s) Black had been doing. So how did the county deal with the problem?

Black's work, or, more accurately, part of his work, was contracted out to a private firm at \$1800 per month. Black had shown himself generally to be a competent, experienced employee, able to fill several positions. Why, wondered other employees, did the county pay more for just one of Black's jobs instead of simply giving him the requested raise?

County Administrator Smith admitted that he thinks \$1800 was "a little high." Smith now says that Black "was about to get a higher position, but he left. It was unfortunate, really."

Inyo County News-Letter

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We are in trouble!

ONLY A FEW DAYS LEFT!

AN "OFFICIAL" LIE WILL GO TO
THE LEGISLATURE AS "TRUTH."

Page 34 of the August 1979 draft report by the State of California Department of Water Resources contains the statement that it has been decided (officially) that the Owens Valley Basin groundwater level does not indicate a traditional overdraft of water from the Owens Basin.

That's the word that the legislators will have to base future legislation on, if there is no protest.

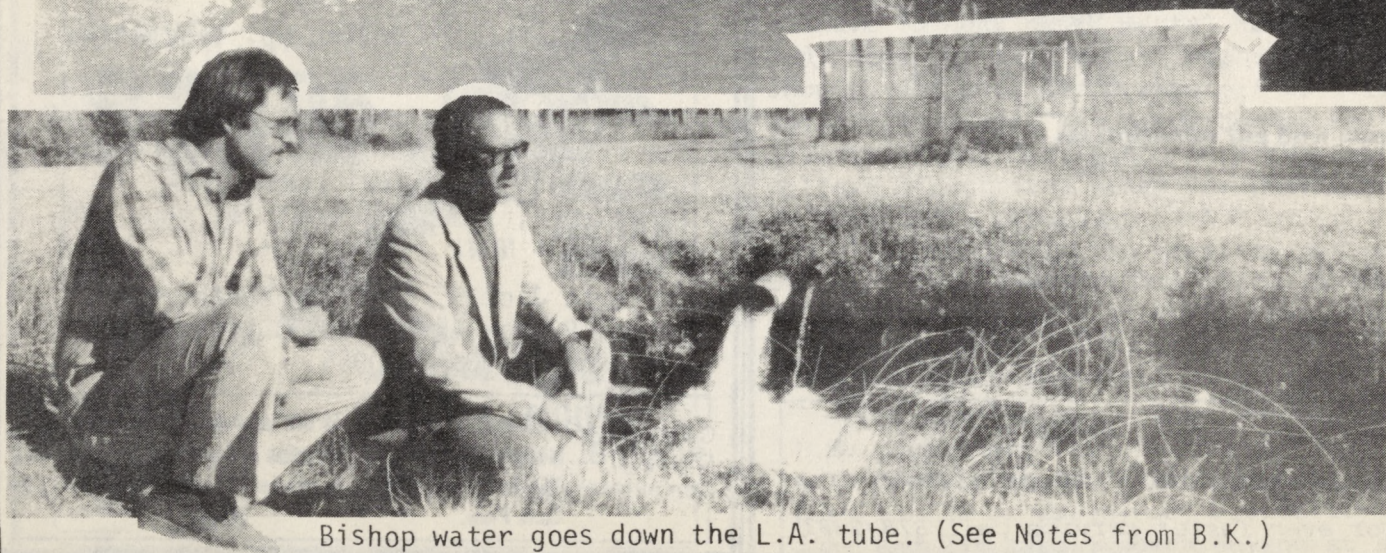
And the valley is drying up! Vegetation is dying!

If you disagree with DWR's assessment of the situation, which must go before the legislature in a final report before Jan. 1, 1980, you must let your view be known - NOW!

Write to Jack S. Coe, DWR Southern District, PO Box 6598, 849 S. Broadway, Los Angeles, Cal. 90055.

Concerned Citizens Committee
If you want to help in our protest please call: Lillian Nelson (Box 304) at 938-2208 in Big Pine; write to Box 366 in Independence or phone 876-5660 (Box 617) in Lone Pine.

Fotopage



Photos:
John
Heston

Bishop water goes down the L.A. tube. (See Notes from B.K.)

Notes from B.K.



Benett
Kessler

SOME OBSERVERS at meetings of the board of supervisors would swear that former Supervisor Herb London slept through a few board sessions. Not so, says Herb, but following a board hearing recently - which he attended for some issue or another - he did admit to some occasional boredom. The hearing he attended had finally deteriorated into an endless droning talk by the supervisors. "This," confided Herb, "is why I always had trouble keeping my eyes open." And *that* I can understand.

DECEMBER'S WARM WEATHER has caused a few nervous businessmen to keep a weather eye out. They're becoming increasingly concerned: No snow, no skiers, no bucks coming up the highway. And a few businessmen express concern over the "tourist future" of the valley. What with the inconstancies of weather - and the gas shortage - they wonder if it may be time for Inyo to import a few industries - light manufacturing, non-polluting industry, etc. - in the hopes that we may become "independent." As to whether the political climate would be compatible with that idea, well, that's another thing.

THE TWO GENTLEMEN on the opposite page are Randy Pestor of Inyo's planning department and the district attorney, L.H. "Buck" Gibbons. They're watching water being taken (illegally, it seems) from the Bishop water supply. Until lately a lot of Bishop folk have been more or less unconcerned with some of the valley's water problems with DWP (After all, or so they thought, DWP wasn't into *their* water), but now Bishop is having a second look. That flowing well, which has been uncapped for years, and the pump in the lower picture, are draining off water from the Bishop Cone - a direct violation of a court injunction prohibiting removal of water from the area *except for the beneficial use of Bishop*. And where is the water going to? Right into the aqueduct, headed for all those good folks down south who wash down their sidewalks with it.

VERY PLEASANT PEOPLE DEPARTMENT: A pair of Bishop dentists, Dr. C. Jack Randel and Dr. Charles Lee. Gentle expertise; good chairside manner, or so we're told by people recently polished, drilled, canalled, or what have you. Randel's on East Line and Lee's on West Line at Doc Sessum's former office.

VERY PLEASANT DINING DEPARTMENT: It's the *Cask and Cleaver* out on Old Mammoth Road, set in Sherwin Plaza III, and so far undiscovered by too many tourists. First class food and service; loy-keyed music. The noisy types quickly get the bum's rush and boy do I wish one or two of the local spots would try the same.

THEY SAID IT; we didn't: William Gould, no less a personage than president of Southern California Edison Company, was talking to a lawyer taking a deposition in a nuke power case. Gould said that when the Department of Water and Power "leaves its boundaries" (gets outside of L.A., as in Inyo County), "ill-will is often the result." He had been asked why he thinks the people of Kern County turned down the plant in question, which was to have been sponsored in part by DWP. The Kern people were displaying bumper stickers which read: "Remember the Owens Valley."

MEDIA VS. COURTS ISSUE: The question of whether to have photographers, or even reporters, in the courtroom. One Inyo-Mono Judge, Harry Roberts, sees the presence of reporters in the courtroom as a plus; says people have a right to know what's going on. He encourages a "balanced" amount of media coverage of trials. At present, no TV or still photographers are allowed in Inyo courtrooms - but they're getting a foothold elsewhere. The issue is a current one back in Ohio, my home state, and my Dad, a judge at the superior court

(Continued next page)

NOTES FROM B.K., Continued

level, has been, well, kind of using the media to discourage the media. He's against cameras and television in the courtroom and he went on a television talk show to express the view. And my uncle, another Ohio judge, says he's for TV coverage. Aw, come on now, family; give us newsies a break!

THE BEST SYSTEM: Small, compact cameras with no flash; and quiet-running television cameras manned by quiet-running camera crews. It's been tried in some courtrooms recently and the judges and lawyers say there was no problem. The ban on photographers in courtrooms was the result of the excesses of the 20's and 30's - back when the cameramen kept the place alight with flashbulbs and with undue running around in the courtrooms.

SOON TO RETIRE: the county's tax collector, Fred Flowers, at the end of the year. Fred took on the collector's job by appointment in 1969 after having served with the county in other capacities for a number of years. He is not one to generate controversies, but on the other hand would stand firmly on issues, taking the supervisors to task if he thought it necessary. His quiet efficiency and, as many point out, his sense of fairness, were an asset. A Flowers *protege*, John Treacy, highly recommended by both Flowers and the board of sups, will take his place.

THE PRESIDENT'S MORALE-BUILDING SUGGESTION that the nation's churches ring their bells at noon every day - until the Iranian hostages are released - was no great bell-ringer in Inyo. The local pastors have taken a ho-hum view of the idea, but at least one of them, Rev. Glenn Harper of Trinity Episcopal, Lone Pine, is following Carter's lead. Some other church leaders say the "logistics" of ringing bells at noon are out of step with church schedules, but some say it's "a good idea." Chief problem: finding someone to go to the church at noon each day to ring the bell.

MEANWHILE, THE COUNTY'S CONGRESSMAN, has finally come out - strongly - in the Iran issue. Bill Thomas says he will co-sponsor a house resolution urging Carter to "set a deadline" on the release of the hostages. If that doesn't impress the Iranians then, as Thomas says, the warning should be followed up with immediate dispatch of ground, sea and air forces to the area. He calls for "military action" if the victims are not then released.

WE APPROACHED THE STORY WITH SOME HESITATION: The "child abuse" story reported elsewhere in these pages, but clearly something has been going on to create a 600% increase in cases reported. And even what's in the story is not all of it. We also found out, through sources wishing to remain unidentified, that the "abuse" situation has gone even farther: "abuse" in the form of child pornography. At least one case reported in which very young kids were made to perform for porn films and still photos. And how sick can people get?

FROM NEW YORK COMES THE WORD that Inyo's special counsel Antonio Rossmann is there helping to launch the *Preservation Law Center*, a legal foundation. He's due home in San Francisco any day, then he'll be "spending more time in California."

MORE ABOUT VPP DENTISTS: Dr. J.H. Sessums (See above) has left the practice apparently for good. Now he's into "light manufacturing" down south. He told our source that he'd like to bring the new business to Bishop.

AND MAY THE NEWS IN YOUR DAY be good news every day....

Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

BK

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"GROWTH ISSUE"

**... it's a big one alright, and
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And then one day - under a bright star, we're told - something happened that made it all possible: the answer to his dreams, the end of the struggle, if man wanted to make it so.

Since that time, the question has not been whether man could "grow", but in what way he would grow, and along lines of what ethic. Man has a natural, built-in wish to grow - mentally, materially and, yes, spiritually.

And since that long-ago day - under the star - he has grown, and he will grow. But his material and technological expressions of "growth" must reflect an inner spiritual growth. That's "the issue."

Let's follow that star.



Merry Christmas

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